

TURNABOUT -- a domestic epic in four sexual fits (or acts)

3 males

3 females

THE PATSY (both a critic and an enabler)

THE VICTIM

THE HIPPIE

The CHORUS as indicated

SETTINGS a sunny terrace, hotel room, apartment/emergency room,
bedroom, garden clubroom, field, road in fall, healthclub, bowling alley, den,
kitchen

Act 3, Scene 1--bookstore, severe woman reading her poems,
we don't hear the words at first . Our couple starts by
whispering, but emotion carries them into higher registers.

Female Victim (sobs)

But you used to!

Female Patsy (comforting)

Now now.

Female Victim

How quickly people forget.

Female Patsy

I am not people.

Female Victim

Might as well be.

Poet

I AM NOT THE PERSON YOU LOVED, AND LOVE.

That person, as I said, is dead.

Female Patsy

Too ridiculous.

Female Victim

Well it means a lot to me!

Poet

My rebirth has sexualized the universe!

The Times reported it in verse!

Female Patsy

Out of the question.

Poet

Men ,of course, get worse.

Female Victim

Why live? Why even live?

Poet

I thought of suicide
but how, then,

could I go on
hating?

Female Patsy (giggle)

Or dating?

Female Victim

Shhh! Kindly keep your scum to yourself!

Female Patsy

Now now.

Female Victim

Such a small thing I ask. So small!

Female Patsy

Now now.

Female Victim

I would.

Female Patsy

No longer appropriate, that's all. Not that it was wrong when--

Female Victim

Appropriate! Great God! Was Romeo and Juliet appropriate?

Patsy

We're a couple of Juliets. Maybe that's the trouble. Plain vanilla. Anyway, she never paid a bill, for one thing.

Female Victim

Appropriate! How can you even say that? Get the word into your mouth?

Female Patsy

Easily.

Female Victim

And what I'm asking isn't easy?

Female Patsy

Right now I couldn't think of anything more difficult. Or more ridiculous.

Female Victim

Shit! I've just been fooling myself. You don't love me and never have.

Female Patsy

Perhaps. That is...of course I--some moments I sincerely do and at others--? It's...funny.

Female Victim

Unconstant in a wink and therefore fickle forever!

Female Patsy

Haven't heard that one. Jiffy quotations dot com?

Female Victim

I made it up!

Female Patsy

Not bad.

Female Victim

Fritter fritter fritter. Oh yes! To your advantage. The delay card, always the delay card.

Female Patsy

Now now. Why don't we just listen? (re poet) This woman could get the Nobel Prize someday--if she butches up a bit.

Female Victim

Please?

Female Patsy

You know my feeling on this. What was appropriate, what seemed right, uh, before, now simply isn't. How much of an asshole do you want? People move on!

Female Victim

You'd say Love is an asshole!

Poet

LOVE IS AN ASSHOLE! X-rated,
the female pope pontificated.

Female Patsy

Now now. Uh, run that by me again, will you? Uh, both of you.

Female Victim

Fuck you!

Female Patsy

Very well then, fuck me.

Female Victim

And not in the way you mean.

Female Patsy

I don't mean it in the way that I mean.

Poet

HOW CAN WE KNOW WHAT WE MEAN? Sad!
Life being ever a scene, bad!

How can we mean what we mean
without THEM?

For we've excised their moderate balls,
and now don't want 'em.

That poem is entitled The Elgin Marbles.

Female Victim
Language! Your downfall!

Female Patsy (nodding to poet)
All of ours.

Female Victim
Thinking that it means anything.

Female Patsy
Caught you in a paradox there. What you want me to say means
volumes evidently, and yet language itself means nothing, from
Shakespeare to PLAYGIRL.

Poet
Be my playgirl playboy plaything. Thing.
That'll do. Whatever
is not true.

Female Victim (frosty)
I wouldn't know.

Female Patsy

Now now.

Female Victim (Cracking)
Jesus Christ! Do you want all my dignity? Don't you realize
I'm out here with my very heart on the block, that I've gone too
far out. Please, leave me some little self respect! Please!
(sinks to floor) I am begging you! (thrashing about) Begging
you!

Female Patsy (avoiding pursuit while
appealing with several now-now pantomimes for poet response)

Poet
Now now! Some things we can't allow, you see.
Insufficiently LIT-er-AH-eee..

Life itself falls
woefully
short.

We desire love and get filth-
y dishes in the sink,
the body and its stinks.

Female Patsy
We've been here almost an hour and no mention of darrrrr-k
menstrual blood. What kind of woman poet are you, anyway?

Female Victim (all but tackling PATSY)
Well? (retching)

Female Patsy
Oh very well!

Female Victim (leaping up, brightened)
Yes! Yes!

Female Patsy (muttered)
You are my--

Female Victim
Speak up! Don't always mumble!

Female Patsy (inaudible)

Female Victim
Whaaaaaaa?

Female Patsy
I said...you are my Bumpty-Wumpy.

Poet (applauds)
Say it!
Don't forever play it!

Female Victim (collapsing)
But like a DENTist I had to-- Like a dentist...ex-TRACTING!
Just to save the smallest sliver of face! A dentist! The
tiniest, WINE-EEEEEEEEEEEE-ist slivvvvvvvvv-er of face!
(inarticulate whining follows)

Female Patsy
(mouthing "now now" to POET.)

Poet
NOW! Don't ever ever bend.
You'll take a hit!

For all these books are full of shit
and dead white men.

=====

Scene 2 Bedroom, shorty nightgowns, silver champagne bucket,
Chinese food being handed them by deliveryman.

Female Victim
Has it been a year?

Female Patsy (toasting w/ empty glass)
Reason for all this, hah!, expensive food.

Female Victim
All China wouldn't be enough--what I put up with.

Female Patsy (spins bottle in bucket)
Uh, um, yes, uh, more champagne, dear?

Female Victim
Not trying to get me drunk? Of course you don't have to
anymore. Performance on demand, isn't that it? None of the
playing, and the lovely Bumpty Wumpy I so loved. Never more of
that of course.

Deliveryman
Who Humby Bumby?

Female Patsy
I must've come in late.

Female Victim
Just because we're ... doesn't lift the obligation of...to--

Female Patsy
I'm missing something. Gifts you mean? Hallmark? What?

Deliveryman
Who get egg foo yung?

Patsy (cont)
Pagoda shaped dildo? What?

Female Victim
I mean an attitude! (racking sobs)

Female Patsy
Now now.

Female Victim
(continues a sort of combined crying and inarticulate whining,
and so PATSY, draining glass, exhorts deliveryman to "now-now")

Deliveryman
Now now (in intonation levels a la Chinese language, then, almost
snapping) Who get General Wang Chicken?

Both
We've given up on General Wangs.

Victim
I've given everything up!

Patsy and Deliveryman
Now now now. (He starts feeding Victim.)

=====

Scene 2 upscale picnic in field. Chorus of cowpersons dressed
like they might be in a cutsey production of *Oklahoma*. Parody-
dance with posthole digger, start building fence, which
ultimately could go between couple. Couple stares at them.

Male Victim
Has it been a year?

Male Patsy (toasting empty glass)
Reason for all this expensive food.

Male Victim
All France wouldn't be enough--what I put up with.

Male Patsy
Uh, um, yes, uh, more champagne, dearie?

Male Victim
Not trying to get me drunk? Of course you don't have to

anymore. Performance on demand, isn't that it? None of the playing, and the lovely Bumpty Wumpty. Never more of that of course. And don't you dare puke out your fuckin "now-now!"

Male Patsy

I must've come in late.

Male Victim

Just because we're ... doesn't lift the obligation of...to--

Male Patsy

I'm missing something. Gifts you mean? Hallmark? What?
(Dancing Cowboy pretends to be snatching heart out, giving it to cowgirl)

Male Victim

I mean an attitude! (racking sobs)

Male Patsy

Now now.

Male Victim

I said don't...don't...(continues a sort of combined crying and inarticulate whining, and so PATSY, draining glass, exhorts chorus to now-now. They do, in a dancey fence-building way. Couple gets a bit knocked around)

Chorus

Now now etc.

=====

Act 1, Scene 5 Female Victim alone, w/ potted palm. Gets, up, waters it. Chorus, well-dressed, prissy, members of some garden club take watercan, as VICTIM is doing it poorly. Their actions will be mechanical, stylized.

Enter Hippie (opposite sex live-in) eating from a can and then throwing it away. Garden member retrieves, and plants something in it.

Female Victim

As I was saying, that person--

Male Hippie (burps, wipes face on sleeve)

Yeah...like well it's tough.

Female Victim

--took my dignity away. I begged and begged. Until I became less than human.

Male Hippie

Yeah, uh, like--

Female Victim

Believe me there was no extent I wouldn't go to. It became harrowing and ultimately disgusting. Ugh! Just disgusting! Ihhhh! Slime you turn into! Doormat! Wipe your feet on me, or or or anything more disgusting.

Male Hippie

Yeah like well it's tough.

Female Victim

My life is gone. Gone! Kaput! I've ruined it. I mean it was ruined for me. A lot of people cooperated on that little project, you can bet your ass on that one! Not just old whats-his-name.

Male Hippie

Yeah like well it's tough.

Female Victim

And what...was left? The horrible, insidious memories of COMFORTING! (Here a manic walk in which now-nows in every possible intonation are mocked.) Now now (etc) (knocks plants over. Chorus follows her to right them, imitates her mocking intonations.)

Chorus

Now Now etc

Male Hippie

(has interjected a word at a time into above speeches)
Yeah...well...like...tough.

Female Victim (breathless)

Such minimal, miserable attempts at being a human being! (to chorus) Such minimal, miserable attempts at being human beings! (They respond with the finger. One flings a plant but is wide of the mark.)

Male Hippie

Yeah...well, like I said, it's tough.

Female Victim

And what's left? What's left now? (clumps down to knees) (to audience) Oh Sweet Merciful God, what is left?

Male Hippie

You got any fuckin money?